

QUARANTINE STATION AT FORT MORGAN, ALA.

FEBRUARY 3 (calendar day, FEBRUARY 12), 1925.—Ordered to be printed

Mr. JONES of Washington, from the Committee on Commerce,
submitted the following

REPORT

[To accompany H. R. 8090]

The Committee on Commerce, to whom was referred the bill (H. R. 8090) authorizing the Secretary of the Treasury to remove the quarantine station now situated at Fort Morgan, Ala., to Sand Island, near the entrance of the port of Mobile, Ala., and to construct thereon a new quarantine station, have considered the same and report thereon with an amendment, and as so amended recommend that the bill do pass.

The bill thus amended has the approval of the Department of the Treasury, as will appear by the annexed communications, the amendment referred to therein having been incorporated in the bill as reported.

Page 2, line 2, strike out the figures "\$500,000" and insert "\$300,000" in lieu thereof.

There also is attached and made a part of this report the following portion of the House report on the same bill:

TREASURY DEPARTMENT,
Washington, April 22, 1924.

HON. SAMUEL E. WINSLOW,

*Chairman Committee on Interstate and Foreign Commerce,
House of Representatives, Washington, D. C.*

MY DEAR MR. WINSLOW: In compliance with your request of March 21, 1924, for a report and my views in regard to H. R. 8090, a bill authorizing the Secretary of the Treasury to remove the quarantine station now situated at Fort Morgan, Ala., to Sand Island, near the entrance of the port of Mobile, Ala., and to construct thereon a new quarantine station, I have the honor to state that I favor the passage of the bill as drafted.

The quarantine station for the protection of the city of Mobile is situated on a narrow strip of land at the entrance to Mobile Bay, adjacent to Fort Morgan and 30 miles distant from the city. Because of its exposed situation, this station is in constant danger of the elements. Whenever a severe storm approaches it is necessary to remove the floating equipment to a place of safety a considerable distance from the station, and for the personnel of the station to take refuge in bomb-proof shelters at Fort Morgan.

In the past this station has been more or less dependent upon the Army supply boat plying between Fort Morgan and Mobile for the transportation of ice and

other supplies. Since the Army has recently announced its intention to abandon Fort Morgan, it will be necessary for the quarantine station to maintain its own service, and the cost of operation will be correspondingly increased. The location of the station, 30 miles distant from the port which it is destined to protect, adds greatly to the cost of upkeep.

By an act approved February 19, 1919, the Legislature of the State of Alabama set aside a tract of 12 acres of land in the vicinity of the city of Mobile for the purpose of establishing and maintaining a properly equipped quarantine station. The State of Alabama is now taking steps to cede the balance of Sand Island to the United States in order to improve the suitability of the location as to area and to reduce the cost to the United States Government of the widening of the shipping channel to be made incident to the proposed placing of the quarantine station on Sand Island. Sand Island was created in the course of harbor improvements. Because of its location and protection from northern gales it is well suited for the establishment of a quarantine station thereon.

Not only would the cost of maintenance be considerably reduced but the efficiency of the station would be greatly enhanced by its removal to the proposed site, since the quarantine officer will be able to exercise constant surveillance over shipping in the harbor. Extensive improvements in the harbor of Mobile, planned and appropriated for by the State of Alabama, represent additional reason for location of the quarantine station on Sand Island.

Because of the fact that Mobile is in constant communication with ports in Mexico, Central and South America, where yellow fever and plague are endemic, and since the climatic conditions at Mobile are favorable for the propagation of the particular type of mosquitoes and the rodents which carry these diseases, it is extremely important that adequate quarantine facilities be provided at this port.

During the fiscal year July 1, 1921, to June 30, 1922, 473 vessels, carrying 11,759 passengers and crews, were inspected at the Mobile quarantine station; 126 of these vessels were fumigated for the destruction of rodents and mosquitoes. During the fiscal year July 1, 1922, to June 30, 1923, 388 vessels, carrying 10,107 passengers and crews, were inspected; 124 of these vessels were fumigated for the destruction of rodents and mosquitoes. During this fiscal year two vessels arrived with suspected cases of yellow fever on board.

Respectfully,

A. W. MELLON,
Secretary of the Treasury.

The present quarantine station at Fort Morgan was originally built and operated by the State of Alabama, and was acquired by the United States Government by act of Congress of June 19, 1906, for the sum of \$18,000, the transfer being effected February 20, 1907. The acquisition of this station was not predicated on its physical value and suitability but was incident to the established policy of transfer of maritime quarantine activities from the individual States to the Federal Government. The only manner in which such transfer could be effected was, as in many other instances, by acquisition of the State operated quarantine stations. Had the Government established a new quarantine station for the protection of the city of Mobile, it would not have located the station where it is now but would have placed it at or near where the proposed legislation contemplates.

At present the quarantine station for the protection of the city of Mobile is situated on a narrow strip of land at the entrance to Mobile Bay adjacent to Fort Morgan and 30 miles distant from the city. Because of this exposed situation, the station is in constant danger from the elements. Severe storms are frequent in that locality. Whenever such a storm approaches it is necessary to remove the floating equipment to a place of safety a considerable distance from the station, and for the personnel of the station to take refuge in bomb-proof shelters at Fort Morgan.

Severe storms have repeatedly wrecked parts and weakened and endangered the entire station. The water about the station is not deep enough for close approach of vessels to be inspected and fumigated, and these activities must necessarily take place by use of quarantine tugs in the open bay in all kinds of weather. The geographic and weather conditions materially hamper the proper functioning of this station, and shipping stopped for inspection or detained for longer periods incident to quarantine procedure is at times exposed to inordinately great risk.

The station is built on wooden piles and located entirely over water of Mobile Bay. It is reached by a wooden gangway from the shore, similar gangways

connecting its buildings. The buildings are of light wooden construction, one story, with shingle roofs. They have a floor area ranging from 80 square feet to 4,900 square feet.

For water supply and fire protection the station depends practically altogether on the water system at the Army post on shore, from where exposed iron pipes lead along the gangways to the buildings of the station. The station is lighted from an inadequate acetylene-gas machine and by kerosene lamps.

For years past reports have been submitted recommending the removal of this station to a more suitable location. Because of the situation and dilapidated physical condition of the station, for the upkeep of which little has been expended for the past few years beyond barest needs for making the buildings habitable, it has been deemed inadvisable to make extensive physical improvements there pending ultimate relocation.

All along the station has depended in large measure on accommodations extended by the military authorities at Fort Morgan. The Army maintained, until recently, regular communication carrying mail, personnel, and supplies from the city of Mobile to Fort Morgan. With the discontinuance of this service it can hardly be conceived that the station can be operated in its present form. With the abandonment, now almost completed, of Fort Morgan, extension of use of its facilities must necessarily cease. Were arrangements made for the quarantine station to operate the power and pump house at the Fort Morgan Army post to continue the water supply, there would not only be required additional fuel and other supplies and additional personnel but also extensive repairs to this water system, which has been severely damaged in freezing weather during the past winter.

It would further be necessary to establish regular communication service with the city of Mobile for mail and supplies and the carrying back and forth of personnel, the duties in connection with quarantine work necessitating inspection and supervision at the docks of Mobile in order to insure compliance with instructions to masters of vessels given at the quarantine station now 30 miles away. The cost of a suitable tugboat for this service is estimated at from \$90,000 to \$100,000, and the cost of its operation and maintenance (exclusive of major repairs) would be not less than \$10,000 per annum. This boat could not be depended on for boarding duty and would be in addition to the present needs for floating equipment if the station were retained at Fort Morgan.

The lack of protection against storm and the absence of safe anchorage at Fort Morgan must be considered. A breakwater such as would afford a bare minimum of protection to the quarantine boats in average storms would cost no less than \$50,000 and probably more, and its upkeep would involve annual expenditures of considerable magnitude. The depth of water at the quarantine station at Fort Morgan is by far insufficient to permit vessels to be inspected to approach close to that station. To dredge a channel of ample size leading to the quarantine station there is estimated to cost far more than all dredging contemplated in connection with the proposed relocation as contemplated in this bill. Furthermore, it would be necessary to construct a dock at the Fort Morgan quarantine station, which also would cost at least as much as the docking facilities contemplated at the proposed new location. In view of the facts set forth, installation of additional improvements to make the present station at Fort Morgan independent of the Army post, and to effect repairs of the inadequate and greatly deteriorated existing facilities can hardly be deemed more economic than the construction of a new station at a site far more suited for the purpose. In this connection it must be considered that the upkeep of the quarantine station at Fort Morgan would doubtless be greater because of its great exposure to the elements than that of the proposed station on Sand Island. To this greater cost of physical upkeep must be added the cost of operation of the station which, by necessity, would be greater at Fort Morgan than at the proposed new location.

Mobile is one of the major ports of the United States and the only port of importance in Alabama. The State is highly interested in developing the port facilities there, and has authorized expenditure of \$5,900,000 for this work. The location of the quarantine station on Sand Island, as contemplated by this bill, fits well into the plan of port development. Maj. Gen. William L. Sibert, United States Army, retired, directing the improvements to the port facilities, expresses his views in the following quoted telegram:

MOBILE, ALA., May 14, 1924.

Congressman JOHN McDUFFIE,
Washington, D. C.:

State will erect new port facilities 3 miles above mouth of river and 34 miles from Fort Morgan. No ship channel or ship docks at Fort Morgan, and satis-

factory quarantine service from that place now impossible. Impracticable in heavy weather to board ships from Fort Morgan, which forces ships to anchor in channel or go to sea until weather conditions improve. Fumigating ships at Fort Morgan causes them to anchor in narrow channel, thus obstructing navigation and losing time. No land connection between Fort Morgan and Mobile, causing high maintenance costs. New quarantine station north end of Sand Island will provide landing place for ships and make it practicable for quarantine officers to board ships at all times and thus render quick and satisfactory service to shipping.

WILLIAM L. SIEBERT,
Chairman Docks Commission.

It will always be necessary to maintain an adequate quarantine station at this port for its protection and the protection of the country at large. Proper quarantine procedure as required by the laws and regulations of the United States necessitates, and always will necessitate, the maintenance and operation of an adequate quarantine station at this port. The proximity of this port to the Tropics makes adequate quarantine service at Mobile probably more essential than at other ports not so situated.

The committee therefore believe that the relocation of the station on Sand Island must be deemed to result in more economic maintenance and operation and in enforcement of the quarantine laws and regulations to better advantage and highly in the interest of commerce and the safeguarding of the health of the people at large.

The committee further believe that the removal of the quarantine station to Sand Island will result in greater economy to the people of the United States than the retaining of the quarantine station at Fort Morgan, which retention would necessitate the reconstruction of that quarantine station, the dredging of a channel, and the construction of breakwaters and a dock, at a cost estimated to be greater than that of a new quarantine station on Sand Island as contemplated by this bill.

The committee are further convinced that the unsatisfactory location of the present quarantine station results in considerable delay and danger to shipping and deems this fact a further important reason for recommending passage of this bill.

TREASURY DEPARTMENT,
Washington, January 13, 1925.

HON. WESLEY L. JONES,
*Chairman Committee on Commerce,
United States Senate.*

MY DEAR SENATOR JONES: With reference to your conversation with Surgeon General Cumming relative to H. R. 8090 authorizing construction of a quarantine station on Sand Island in the harbor of Mobile, Ala., and to my letter to the chairman of the Committee on Interstate and Foreign Commerce of the House of Representatives approving the bill as it was finally passed by the House, I beg leave to inform you that after careful consideration of the present status of the harbor improvements at Mobile and the site and all other considerations entering at present into the question, it is believed that it will be practicable, by eliminating some of the dredging and other items estimated for in the House bill, to construct a suitable quarantine station for \$300,000. In view of the present state of the old quarantine station, which is many miles from the city, early action by your committee would be appreciated.

Respectfully,

A. W. MELLON,
Secretary of the Treasury.

TREASURY DEPARTMENT,
Washington, May 26, 1924.

HON. W. L. JONES,
*Chairman Committee on Commerce,
United States Senate.*

MY DEAR MR. JONES: In compliance with your request of May 22, 1924, for a report and my views in regard to S. 3353, a bill authorizing the Secretary of the Treasury to remove the quarantine station now located at Fort Morgan,

Ala., to Sand Island, near the entrance of the port of Mobile, Ala., and to construct thereon a new quarantine station, I have the honor to state that I favor the passage of the bill as drafted.

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In the past this station has been more or less dependent upon the Army supply boat plying between Fort Morgan and Mobile for the transportation of ice and other supplies. Since the Army has recently announced its intention to abandon Fort Morgan, it will be necessary for the quarantine station to maintain its own service and the cost of operation will be correspondingly increased. The location of the station 30 miles distant from the port which it is destined to protect adds greatly to the cost of upkeep.

By the act approved February 19, 1919, the Legislature of the State of Alabama set aside a tract of 12 acres of land in the vicinity of the city of Mobile for the purpose of establishing and maintaining a properly equipped quarantine station. The State of Alabama is now taking steps to cede the balance of Sand Island to the United States in order to improve the suitability of the location as to area and to reduce the cost to the United States Government of the widening of the shipping channel to be made incident to the proposed placing of the quarantine station on Sand Island. Sand Island was created in the course of harbor improvements. Because of its location and protection from northern gales it is well suited for the establishment of a quarantine station thereon.

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During the fiscal year July 1, 1921, to June 30, 1922, 473 vessels carrying 11,759 passengers and crews, were inspected at the Mobile quarantine station. One hundred and twenty-six of these vessels were fumigated for the destruction of rodents and mosquitoes. During the fiscal year July 1, 1922, to June 30, 1923, 388 vessels, carrying 10,107 passengers and crews, were inspected. One hundred and twenty-four of these vessels were fumigated for the destruction of rodents and mosquitoes. During this fiscal year two vessels arrived with suspected cases of yellow fever on board.

Respectfully,

A. W. MELLON,
Secretary of the Treasury.



